



## State Mammal: Ringtail



SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Bassariscus astutus*

DESCRIPTION: A cat-sized mammal with a raccoon-like tail. Coat coloration ranges from stony gray to light tan, with longer black-tipped guard hairs. Color is paler on sides and dark down the middle of the back. Feet have five digits, and the pads have no fur. The tail is as long as the body and white underneath. It has many alternating black and white rings and a black tip.

RANGE: Southwestern Oregon south along Pacific coast to southern end of Baja California. Portions of Nevada, Utah, Missouri, Louisiana and Kansas. Most of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and Mexico. Found in elevations from 0 – 9,500 feet.

HABITAT: Rocky walls of canyons, slopes, cliffs and ridges in desert scrub, chaparral and the oak-pine belt. Typically found near water sources. During the day, it will retreat to rock crevices, boulder piles, tree hollows, dens dug by other animals, or human dwellings.

DIET: Omnivore. Foraging mainly at night on small birds, rodents, lizards, snakes, invertebrates and fruit. By eating fruit from the prickly pear, it can reduce its need for water. At times, it will eat carrion.

ACTIVITY PERIOD: Nocturnal.

REPRODUCTION: Mate from February to May. Females are receptive for only 24 hours. Gestation period is 51 – 54 days. Litter consists of three to four young in April through July. Males will help provide for family. Young will begin roaming and foraging after about eight weeks and will leave the mother in the late summer. Become sexually mature at 10 months.

STATUS: Threatened in Mexico. Population is apparently stable. Is often trapped for fur. Inadvertent poisoning caused by scavenging poisoned carcasses.

Arizona Game and Fish Department. 2004. *Bassariscus astutus*. Unpublished abstract compiled and edited by the Heritage Data Management System, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Phoenix, AZ. 4 pp.

Photo: G. Andrejko